

‘Workers will not die for capitalist profits!’

By Betsey Piette

This year’s celebrations of May 1, International Workers’ Day, in the United States reflected the growing coast-to-coast fightback of workers confronting their bosses’ and the capitalist system’s total disregard for worker health and job safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The array of workers’ actions is historic, with essential workers in health care, food, retail and delivery services taking the lead, joined by unionized, undocumented and incarcerated workers.

Car caravans offered creative and safe alternatives to mass gatherings to adhere to social-distancing safety concerns. Actions also included one-day strikes, walkouts and sick-ins. Whatever the tactics, the resilience and determination of an awakening powerful working class were on display.

On May 1, revolutionary and progressive forces organized car caravans throughout **New York City**, in keeping with COVID-19 social distancing protocols. Caravans crisscrossed Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens under the banner of May Day Workers Solidarity: Caravan for

Our Lives. Demands included hazard pay and personal protective equipment for essential workers; cancellation of rent; free health care and COVID testing for all; a relief fund for undocumented workers; an end to U.S. wars and more.

The caravans managed to assemble despite police attempts to disband them, blocking off gathering locations and threatening participants with arrest. The caravans visited hospitals, Whole Foods, Target, Trader Joe’s, jails, public housing and a bus depot, where they were enthusiastically received by Metropolitan Transport Authority workers from Transit Workers Local 100, before converging on Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s Manhattan office. The response from working and oppressed people on the street was overwhelmingly positive.

The caravans were organized as part of the nationwide People’s Strike called by Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi. Participants involved a broad coalition of migrant rights, workers’ organizations and anti-imperialist forces, including Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere (FIRE), the Laundry Workers Center, International League of Peoples



May Day caravan in Philadelphia.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Struggle (ILPS), Cosecha NYC, Close the Camps NYC, Take Back the Bronx, Local 100 Fightback, the People’s MTA, People’s Power Assemblies/NYC and Red Bloom.

Other groups involved were BAYAN USA, New York Boricua Resistance, New York Community Action Project, DSA Afrosocialists and Socialists of Color Caucus, Desis Rising up and Moving, the Street Vendors Project, Unity and Struggle, Queens Neighborhood United, Workers World Party and more.

May Day events in New York City included banner drops across the city

with the slogan #CancelRent on dozens of buildings announcing rent strikes; a socially distanced action at Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens, organized by BAYAN USA in solidarity with health care workers; and a rally at a Staten Island Amazon warehouse organized by Chris Smalls, an Amazon worker fired for organizing for safe working conditions. Despite the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the complete failure of the U.S. government to organize an effective response, May Day in this city was full of

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WWP May Day message Organize!

This edited talk was given by First Secretary of Workers World Party Larry Holmes at “May Day Webinar! Workers Power: Building Workers Assemblies” sponsored by WWP on May 1.

Happy May Day to everyone. This is the perfect occasion for everybody in the workers’ movement around the world to reflect on the real meaning of International Workers’ Day. That is the need for solidarity across all boundaries, the need for militancy, the need for revolutionary direction and the need for

massive organizing.

Because no matter how bad things were for workers before this pandemic, they are worse now. And they’re going to get even worse. People are dying unnecessarily of this pandemic because capitalism does not value the lives of workers, all workers, but Black and Brown workers in particular. Workers have been forced to go to work without proper protection.

And on top of all this, the global capitalist economy is sinking into another

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Sat., May 16: Two plenary sessions:

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Strategies and tactics to help build political solidarity with workers & the oppressed 2 pm – 4 pm ET / 11 am – 1 pm PT

Registration link at www.workers.org

what road to socialism?

North Carolina

Car caravan demands aid for people, not companies

By Calvin Deutschbein
Durham, N.C.

Following decades of genocidal governmental policies exposed by the coronavirus crisis, North Carolinians had enough! A coalition of hundreds of community groups called “NC United for Survival & Beyond” organized a 30-car caravan on April 24 — a protest that allowed activists to safely distance from one another.

The cars travelled to gather outside the home of North Carolina Senate President Phil Berger in Eden, N.C., to demand that he and the N.C. General Assembly respond to the pandemic crisis and provide immediate relief to the people of the state — and not the corporations. Drivers honked while passengers banged pots and pans.

Protesters read a list of 10 demands from the coalition’s platform, which 200 local organizations had signed. Activist Juan Miranda explained: “The demands ranged from expanding Medicaid without impediment to access. We are demanding all immigrants, regardless of legal status, have access to emergency services, access to language justice, cash assistance to community members who don’t have access to government ID, and ending all collaboration with ICE.” (Triad City Beat, April 24)

For years, Berger had opposed expanding Medicaid in the state, which health experts estimate costs the lives of 4,000 state residents a year. He presided over a sprawling statewide system of killer jails and prisons, with sheriffs who collaborate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to engage in ethnic cleansing and with landlords in order to manufacture a homeless population. Conditions within the prison system have been found by even the neoliberal United Nations to violate human rights.

Stop police repression!

The police have not only allowed, but supported right-wing demonstrations in favor of forcing workers back to work, ignoring the health risks they face. But the cops



WW PHOTO: DURHAM BUREAU

One of 30 cars in the April 24 North Carolina protest.

treated this protest quite differently, as its aim was to hold the politicians in power accountable for their actions — and their inaction in not helping the communities hit hard by COVID-19.

Not long after the caravan moved on, cops from the Eden Police Department stopped it in what they alleged was a routine traffic stop. But obviously, it was not that, as the cops identified and arrested Loan Tran of the Emergency Committee to End the Durham Eviction Crisis. Like many other activists, especially in the U.S. South, Tran has previously been targeted by police at solidarity actions.

Another local activist said that her colleague was released soon after the arrest, but was charged with three traffic violations: “It is disturbing that, instead of allowing people to have free speech, that instead of how they did in Raleigh [during the Reopen NC protests] with people who weren’t socially distant, [the police] decided to detain people for exercising their rights. [Activists] were being targeted and potentially profiled. We call for those charges to be dropped immediately!” (Triad City Beat, April 24)

Drop the charges! Free Loan Tran! □



Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans

Join us in the fight for socialism!

people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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Vol. 62, No. 19 • May 7, 2020

Closing date: May 6, 2020

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the last week of December by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$36; institutions: \$50. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.

New York, N.Y. 10011.



Austin

Outrage after police killing is caught on video

By Taegan Stross
Austin, Texas

The Austin Police Department carried out an extrajudicial killing of 42-year-old Michael Brent Ramos, known as “Mike,” on April 24. Local media reported that the APD was responding to a call about two people, allegedly in possession of a gun, doing drugs in a parked car.

According to local witnesses, police responded by surrounding the vehicle, blocking the exit from an apartment complex parking lot as well as a nearby intersection. What followed was captured by numerous cell phone cameras and uploaded to various social media pages.

A video showed the police drawing their weapons and ordering Mike Ramos out of the car. As he steps out with his hands in the air, his waistline is exposed. None of the video angles show a weapon. The cops order Ramos to step toward them. In one video he can be heard saying that he is afraid of what might happen if he does.

That’s when a pig who just graduated from the academy three months ago fires a bean bag from his shotgun, hitting Ramos in the chest. Ramos falls to the ground and scrambles to get inside his vehicle. He pulls the door closed and begins to drive away. The videos show that his vehicle never went in the direction of the police.

The rookie’s partner, a five-year APD veteran, fired three rounds at Ramos, causing him to crash into a car parked nearby. Ramos later died in the hospital.

Top pig Chief Brian Manley, whose police force has been widely criticized for an internal culture of racism



A banner drop in Austin on April 27 demands justice for Mike Ramos.

that intimidates anyone who speaks out, stated no weapon was found on Mike Ramos. His tragic death has left his mother, Brenda Ramos, without her only son. She has since started a gofundme.com fundraiser at “Justice for Mike Ramos.”

Local residents, enraged by the killing, risked personal safety to protest outside that same night. Then a follow-up protest was held on Saturday night, April 25, with many calling the APD murderers and racists.

The Austin Justice Coalition, a local police reform and justice advocacy group, wrote a letter addressed to the

City Council, mayor and city manager demanding the removal of Police Chief Manley, Chief of Staff Troy Gay and Assistant City Manager Rey Arellano. It demanded an independent investigation of the shooting and a delay to a scheduled June police academy class to implement training reforms.

The letter detailed the APD’s history of racism and its refusal to respond to demands made by both the people of Austin and its City Council. It was signed by nearly 40 different local organizations, including the newly formed Central Texas Workers Alliance (fb.me/central-texasworkers) and the Texas branch of Workers World Party (fb.me/workersworldtexas).

That evening, as people who were forced to work during the COVID-19 pandemic drove to their homes, a series of four banners were dropped at several highway overpasses. They called for justice for Mike Ramos and a general strike as well as a rent strike on May 1.

The slogans read: “May Day general strike/No blood for the Dow,” “May Day general strike/No work, no rent,” “Rent strike May 1st/ Justice for Mike Ramos!” and “Justice 4 Mike Ramos!”

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott plans to continue allowing businesses to open, despite the advice of experts and the general support among workers for social distancing and economic shutdown. With the police killing of Mike Ramos on top of this health disaster, workers in Austin are finding themselves with no choice but to fight back. □

On the picket line

By Sue Davis

‘Lessons from the First Union Climate Strike in the U.S.’

The one-day, unfair-labor-practices strike on a very cold Feb. 27 evening by Service Employees (SEIU) Local 26, which represents 4,000 commercial janitors in Minneapolis, was overwhelmingly successful. Janitors and their allies fought for green cleaning techniques to reduce carbon emissions from corporate office towers, which account for over 70 percent of carbon emissions from all buildings in Minnesota. The workers, mostly immigrants from Somalia, Mexico, Ecuador and Nepal, were joined by high school students, who led last year’s climate strikes, and environmental justice allies like MN350.org and the Sierra Club.

The hard-fought contract includes funding for a green cleaning initiative to reduce waste, water and energy consumption while transitioning from toxic chemicals; it will be developed with the workers’ input. Wages will increase by \$2.20 per hour over the course of the contract for full-time workers (13 percent over four years) with part-timers hourly pay rising from \$11.12 to \$16 (44 percent increase). All full-time workers will earn six paid sick days by the second year of the contract. Health insurance costs are reduced and sexual harassment policies are included.

The union summarized three lessons learned from the strike: It takes hard work to build a coalition, but it’s worth it. Local 26’s tradition of open bargaining for all members helped develop deep agreement with membership about what the union was fighting for. When a union tries to “bargain for the common good” and take positions outside traditional labor relations, companies will try to ignore demands that require them to give up control — unless the union is willing to strike. (Labor Notes, April 30)

UFCW petitions for members to be treated as frontline workers

Local 400 of the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) has started a petition on their website addressed to governors to recognize their members — grocery store, pharmacy and food production workers — as frontline

workers. Please sign the petition!

All UFCW workers “deserve the same benefits as other frontline workers. ... We keep stores stocked with food and medical supplies ... to make sure families have what they need to weather this crisis. We need your support to keep ourselves and our families safe during this crisis. ... Without us, our country would ground to a halt during this crisis.” (ufcw400.org)

Students introduced to trades in St. Louis area

In March, before the coronavirus shutdown and millions became unemployed, the Southwestern Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council organized apprenticeship tours to introduce more than 400 high school students to their programs. The Trades Council started the program because “young people will respond if they get a chance to find out what the work is like” and “the trades provide an excellent way to make careers in an unpredictable economy.”

Over the course of a weekend, students from 13 high schools around St. Louis were introduced to 11 trades, including those of sheet metal workers, boilermakers, carpenters, electrical workers, plumbers and pipefitters and operating engineers. Trades Council officer Totsie Bailey stated: “We’ve had a lot of good feedback about it. ... The locals did a very good job. ... Guys took off work to help. They were that interested in showing off their local unions.” Bailey added, “And the kids were really interested.”

In addition, special schoolwide outreach events were held at several schools. Some 47 industries were

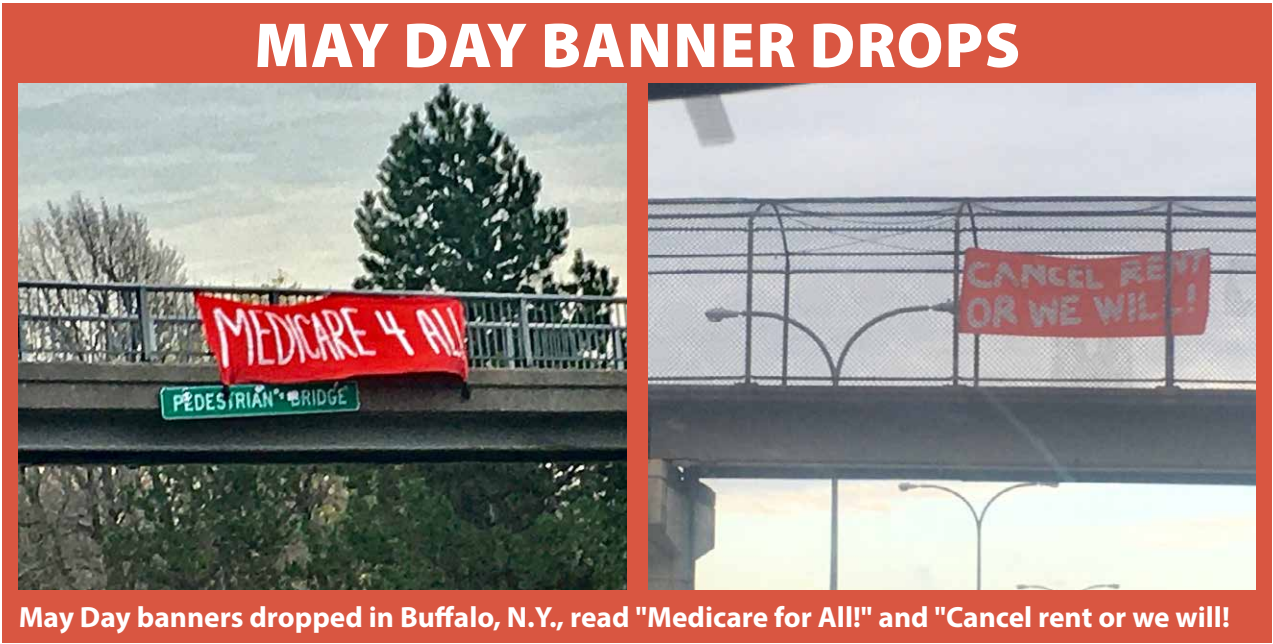
represented at Mascoutah High School where 1,200 students heard from union and industry speakers. Another 1,600 students learned about trades work on Freshman Orientation Day at Granite City High School.

An article in the Mascoutah Herald noted: “These in-person presentations give students a real idea of how these careers impact their community.” The Trade Council plans to continue this hands-on program, with strong support from high schools. (Labor Tribune, April 27)

Union for nonprofit workers grows in April

On March 25, the Nonprofit Professional Employees Union announced a union drive. By April 29 seven nonprofits had joined their growing fold. Three new members were legal organizations: Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, which joined April 13; the National Women’s Law Center on April 22; and the National Immigration Law Center on April 23. Also joining on April 23 was the Groundwork Collaborative, which deals with economic policy and related issues. Friends of the Earth affiliated on April 29.

The NPEU’s mission is to help workers at nonprofit organizations dedicated to social and economic justice create positive, productive workplaces. The union’s goal is to negotiate collectively for higher pay, better benefits and a voice in each organization. Its contracts encourage a collegial relationship with management and establish standards for “fair and equitable treatment of all staff.” (npeu.org) □



May Day banners dropped in Buffalo, N.Y., read "Medicare for All!" and "Cancel rent or we will!"

‘We envision a world without prisons’

By Amber-Rose Howard

Here is a slightly edited transcript of Amber-Rose Howard’s talk during the April 9 Workers World Party webinar. Howard is the executive director of CURB, Californians United for a Responsible Budget. Experiencing a felony conviction as a young adult propelled Howard into a lifetime commitment of organizing against the prison-industrial complex and building up the power of Black people and all others impacted by state violence. View all the April 9 talks at tinyurl.com/y993k6rj.

Thank you for having me on. I really appreciate your listening ears. I work with a coalition of over 80 organizations that was founded in 2003 whose mission is to reduce the number of people in prisons and jails, reduce the number of prisons and jails in the state, and then capture budget savings and shift those resources into community-based alternatives to incarceration and community resources that actually build safe and healthy communities. We envision a world without prisons. And so this is our way of moving toward that goal.

We don't believe that anybody belongs in a cage. And I think we have to hold true to that sort of abolitionist framework. Because when we start to say that some people belong in the cage, then that makes room for many people to be put in cages, and that's why we have an incarceration crisis on our hands right now. California spends over \$16 billion on the corrections budget, and it grows every single year. We have about 35 prisons in the state, including lots of other prisonlike institutions, including for youth and including contracts with private companies.

And so we're always calling for the end of incarceration, as we're always calling for alternatives to incarceration. Right now CURB is really focused on making sure that people understand in this moment, where we are concerned about people who are incarcerated and coming in contact with the Coronavirus, it's really important to realize that there is no way for folks to protect themselves inside.

It is important to understand that we need to look at this from a public health lens. We see lots of organizations, lots of groups all across the state, all across the country even, calling for the release of people. Many people are focused on only releasing people that have short



Amber-Rose Howard speaks during April 9 Workers World Party webinar, ‘Free Them All! COVID-19 and Racist Mass Incarceration.’

time left to serve, only releasing people who have low-level offenses which are nonserious, nonviolent, nonsexual. We're calling for those distinctions to not be a part of the equation. We want to make sure that we're putting forward demands that would allow folks who are elderly and medically vulnerable to be released, regardless of their conviction type. Again, this is a public health issue.

When we're only calling for the release of people who are in the category of those low-level offenses, I think what we're doing is forgetting to recognize that people have spent decades inside transforming themselves. Just as those of us who are not incarcerated spend time transforming ourselves. People on the inside do that as well.

And our governor has outwardly proclaimed that he would not — he is not interested in releasing anyone who has a violent conviction. He actually calls them violent people. What he fails to realize is that a violent conviction does not make you a violent person. I have a violent conviction from when I was 18 years old. And you know, that does not make me a violent person. That is true for so many folks who are also convicted of violent things, especially the ones who are still inside.

We also want to make sure that we're calling for vast clemencies and releases at this time. You know, our governor has made a plan to release about 3,500 people from California state prisons, and those releases will come from accelerated parole dates, so that's folks who were going to be paroled in the next 30 to 90 days already.

That does not include the 30,000 people that we have over the age of 50. That does not include over 30,000 people that we have serving on “three strikes.” That does not include over 5,000 people that have been serving “life without parole,” who already have spent decades in prison and who are the most vulnerable people in the midst of this crisis.

So we're calling for our governor to include those folks — to stop setting forward and perpetuating that false dichotomy of who's deserving and undeserving to be protected. Our governor put forward a moratorium on the death penalty last year, and we don't see a difference and when you're leaving folks inside right now, who deserve to be released, that's no different from sentencing them to death. People will die.

There's over 60 staff members in the California Department of Corrections who tested positive. There's over 30 people who are imprisoned who have tested positive, including people in the women's prison. Chino Institution for Women is right now on lockdown. And we know that they don't have resources to protect themselves. They don't even have resources to, you know, keep their living spaces clean as we've already heard.

That's the case for many folks who were in prison. I think that we have to really focus on making sure that we're including people with all conviction types when we're thinking about releasing elders and releasing people who are medically vulnerable, and we need clemencies now.

We have a campaign that we have partnered with RAPP (Release Aging People in Prison) and the Parole Preparation Project in New York, along with the CCWP (California Coalition for Women Prisoners) here in California, where we're calling for clemency coast to coast. Governor Newsome and Cuomo out in New York set themselves forward as very, very progressive governors — they have not proven that. Lives are in their hands and they have the opportunity to save lives. So we're making sure that we're calling for and speaking up for folks who are being overlooked in this moment and trying to protect our elders.

We have been doing call-ins, emails to our governors, and we have a Twitter campaign that we're running to sort of lift up that work. We're doing another Twitter storm tomorrow. So we'll be sending out materials to folks tonight to be able to join us in calling for clemency coast to coast. You know the only answer is vast releases.

People who are incarcerated will not benefit from any other kind of response except for release. And so I think another question that folks ask when we talk about releasing folks is — Where will people go? Well, you know, people have families — people's families are ready and able and

willing to accept them back home.

And so if we don't have vast releases, we will see people die. So that's the work that CURB is focused on right now in response to this crisis, and I'll share our demand letter in the chat so that folks have access to that. It's on CCWP's website, and it talks all about our DROP LWOP campaign where we're calling for the end of “life without parole” sentencing in the state of California, and we're calling for the commutation of every person who is right now serving time for life without parole.

Why a sweeping call for release?

Moderator Makasi Motema read a question from the chat: Why is a sweeping call for release more effective than making prison conditions better and protecting inmates from the spread of the virus? What about folks who do not have a place to go? Or the places they can go are not adequate for protecting them from the virus?

Howard: I'd love to address that question. I think, first of all, folks have to realize that in a place like California — and I'm sure the same thing is true for many other states — we are at a federal-mandated cap and our prison population is at 137.5 percent. It is impossible to give people enough space to social distance. And we have seen that it's impossible for people to get the resources they need in order to keep themselves clean and to keep their living spaces clean. The only answer is release.

Again, when we think about where people will go we cannot underestimate the number of people who already have family members supporting them while they're incarcerated, who are willing and ready and able to accept them back home and into their communities once they are released. And when we think about the fact that California spends over \$16 billion on their prison budget, we can shift that money so that it goes to community-based organizations that have already been working for decades, so that they can expand their capacity to take care of folks.

There are empty houses, they are vacant places that can be taken over by groups who are very well equipped to take care of folks when they come home. That can be used to expand the capacity. So you know the answer of where will people go? Well, they'll come here; they were living in the community before they were incarcerated. And so there are places in the community where they can return to. We cannot underestimate that. Thank you. □

Commentary by Mumia Abu-Jamal: On prison guards

This slightly edited commentary from April 24 by political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is available at prisonradio.org/media/audio/mumia.

I remember in [State Correctional Institute] Huntington and even in [SCI] Green. You know, when I was alone with a [guard] talking man-to-man, the guy said: “Listen, I'm a peon. You know, something happens here, man, they throw me to the dogs.” And I'm like, Damn! Did he just say that? Yeah!

These guys, they know that. But they're forbidden from really saying that, other than when no one can hear. They believe in the propaganda because it's profitable to do so. It's in their economic benefit. Right? But, like a few days ago, I was listening in on C-SPAN. And a guy called and he was a retiree who worked for the Department of Corrections for 30 years.

And so, you know, now he's getting a retirement check. And he kept talking about “us.” You know: “us” correctional officers. “We” need. “We” fight so hard, blah, blah. And I was like, Dude! He was a Black guy; he was in his 60s. And he's no longer part of them. But in his mind, he's still a part of them.

So I'm saying that was the diabolical genius of [President] William Jefferson Clinton. When they gave billions of dollars to the states to build prisons, they created a class of people who benefited economically in ways they could not have done otherwise — any way in the world, as a rule. And so they're invested — right? — in this system of repression. You're a guy; you're in your 50s or 60s, you're thinking about bringing your son in, and then bringing your grandson in, and having your wife come in and work as a nurse or food service provider. Something like

that. Or as a guard.

Like here in Schuylkill County, these are depressed areas of [Pennsylvania's] economy. But if you can get a job gettin' this kind of loot, you're on top of the hill. You may not be that way in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. But if you think of these former mining communities like Green or this one, Schuylkill, you're eating high on the hog. It feeds the system, this machine.

Because of economics and social movements now, you have more Black and Brown people involved in these repressive industries. But, you know, if you look at it like from space or from a high elevation, things are not getting better. They're getting demonstrably worse.

Yes, that's why I believe in movements because I've seen movements do things in society. And, you know, I always say movements transform consciousness, but they transform more than that. They



transform history. And they transform our vision of the future.

I look at the world. And I have fears and hopes, quite frankly. Because this can go either way. It goes the way that people push. When people create movements, they create change. But if they sit back and wait for others to do something they know they should have done, you're going the way of repression. It's really that dialectical and that clear.

We get what you fight for. What you don't fight for, you don't get. It's that real. So, I believe in movements. I believe in decarceration. □

Louisiana prisons are ‘death concentration camps’

By Quess Moore

This slightly edited talk is by Quess Moore speaking at the April 9 Workers World Party webinar. Moore organizes with New Orleans Workers Group and Take ‘Em Down NOLA, a group which has been working to take down symbols of white supremacy and slavery.



Quess Moore speaking at April 9 Workers World Party webinar.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in this chair about my coalition, my comrades and everybody in New Orleans doing this work.

First and foremost, Take ‘Em Down NOLA was established about five years ago this summer, and our mission is basically the removal of all symbols of white supremacy in the city of New Orleans, as they reflect the systems of racial and economic injustice and oppression of a more than 60 percent Black city. And so, in the city of New Orleans, you’ve had at least 17 monuments to white supremacy. Now 13, thanks to some of our organizing, we were able to successfully get four of them removed back in 2017.

But all of that was really just a wake-up call, a rally to the people in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement to highlight the fact that, you know, state-sanctioned violence has an entire system behind it, an

entire apparatus behind it. A Black person is killed in this country every day, extrajudicially, like unarmed Black people being killed by police, and quite often there’s no justice for it. So we wanted to indict the system as a whole when we first come out with the work with Take ‘Em Down NOLA and show that this happens for a reason—this happens because the violence of the state has been codified inside of this country since its inception.

Since the very beginning, it’s been okay to do with a Black body what you will. Not to mention what’s done to Brown bodies and was done to the Indigenous people of Louisiana before New Orleans was ever established, before it was colonized by the French. This was called Bulbancha in [a] native Indigenous [language] that basically meant gathering of tons of, gathering of several cultures.

This has always been a port city, the actual infrastructure and the layout of it was established by the native Indigenous people who have been here about 3,000 years, some 30 or so groups. They had been here gathering and establishing culture and technology and creating the template, the blueprint that the French and the Spanish first stole from them and created off their backs. The Indigenous people who have been here, you know, they’ve been marginalized and pushed to outskirt towns.

When you look at a city that, to this day, still has a majority Black population that lives in 53 percent poverty, it’s essentially gone from the plantation to the prison, and it’s a prison house economically and a literal prison house. And so right here in the city where it’s mostly Black folks, and it’s 400,000 or so population, 53 percent of us live in poverty. And that’s the result of wage slavery. It’s a result of the fact we have one of the most

booming tourism industries in the world. Eight billion dollars a year come through the city, to this very small city.

And yet, hardly any money, obviously, trickles down to the hospitality workers, and the people are actually holding that system up on their backs. A lot of hospitality workers are working without benefits in obviously very low-paying jobs. And so, it puts us in jeopardy and at risk. And, you know, that risk leads to higher crime rates, because people do, as we say in New Orleans, “get it how they live” and try to figure out how to make money outside of the so-called legal means and that leads to the so-called crime, and the crime leads to us being the number one carceral state in the world’s history. And of course, you know, America is the number one carceral state in the world.

Louisiana is number one in the country; we might be number two to Oklahoma at this point, but usually it’s been us. And number one in the state is New Orleans. And so right here in a very small town is where you have the greatest prison state in the United States. And you see the reflection of that, you know, in prisons like Angola, which was once formerly the plantation Angola. And so what that’s led to is: These are death concentration camps.

In an instance, like what we’re in right now with a pandemic, between the prisons themselves and between a population where one out of five of us are in the hospitality industry, on the so-called essential jobs, a lot of them have been sent home and don’t have work. The ones who still have to go to work are the most exposed, and then the least protected, because, of course, they don’t have the kind of health care that they need in the first place, living in poverty conditions.

So in response to that, what we did

about two days ago [April 7] in the New Orleans Workers Group, which is one of at least a few coalitions that grew out of Take ‘Em Down NOLA a couple years ago, we organized the motorcade and got about 70 cars to drive down to City Hall and also the area around Tulane and Gravier where a lot of incarcerated folks are locked up. We also drove by the ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] detention camps Louisiana has, because it’s, you know, the prison capital [with] two of the biggest ICE detention camps in the country; they just transition from prisons over to ICE detention camps.

We wanted to call alert to the fact that none of these people belong in prison in the first place. The real criminals are the system; they put them in a position to be inside of a cage in the first place. And it’s even more of a crime now that they’re sitting there in that place where all of the virus and all of the disease is concentrated. At least 15 cases were already detected inside the Orleans Parish prison. We know that that’s only going to spread to the workers; they’re going to bring it back to the people. So, as one of our coalitions, the New Orleans Hospitality Workers Association, says, “If we get sick, you get sick.” And that applies not just for the cooks and for all the essential workers, but it’s also for our brothers and sisters and our siblings locked up.

We took that stand in solidarity for them, with them. The bourgeois media, of course, has tried to erase all that narrative. They don’t want people to believe that, you know, all these people believe they deserve their freedom. And they’ve tried to wipe over the story, but we’re keeping that story going. So that’s the most present work that we’ve done here in New Orleans. □

Tenants take on Philadelphia gentrifier

By Doris Grass

Philadelphia--A new and rapidly growing association of residential and commercial tenants of OCF Realty was formed to demand that OCF meet the needs of its tenants during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. Since the inception of Tenants of OCF several weeks ago, members have faced a high level of harassment, intimidation and retaliation from OCF and its owner, one of Philadelphia’s top gentrifiers, Ori Feibush.

A household of four tenants, who wish to remain anonymous for fear of further retaliation, reported that an OCF employee attempted to enter their home twice without notice, violating Pennsylvania’s

stay-at-home order while increasing the tenants’ risk of exposure to COVID-19.

In one instance, an OCF employee successfully entered the house while only one tenant was home and showering. The employee, claiming to be doing a “wellness check” was not wearing any form of personal protective equipment, which greatly alarmed the tenant concerned for her health. When questioned about the purpose of these “wellness checks,” Feibush responded, “A wellness check is exactly what it sounds like.”

Feibush went on to claim that these wellness checks were conducted because previous attempts to contact the tenants went unanswered. However, the tenants had no notice that any wellness checks

occurred. The second wellness check was pure harassment.

Under the guise of “wellness checks,” these visits appear to be a method of pressuring the tenants into paying rent. Unable to pay rent due to job loss from the COVID-19 pandemic, some tenants began withholding rent in April. Yet organizers have made it clear that so far they have not called for a broader rent strike.

According to OCF’s lease agreement, OCF is required to provide tenants with 24-hours’ written notice before entering their home unless there is an emergency. During a pandemic with a statewide stay-at-home order, such an emergency would



Logo of the Tenants of OCF.

be along the lines of a fire, not a vague “wellness check” or failure to pay rent.

Feibush proceeded to harass these tenants and their cosigners via telephone, text message and email to try to coerce them into paying rent. Feibush called them over 20 times in one day. Other OCF tenants have reported alarmingly similar incidents.

Tenants of OCF recently held a meeting to discuss writing a letter to OCF, demanding that OCF follow landlord-tenant law in interactions with tenants. OCF infiltrated the meeting. The following day, Feibush personally called one of the attendees, Shaun Miller, a Black small business owner in the Point Breeze neighborhood. Feibush told Miller that his lease would not be renewed because of what he said in the meeting. This refusal to renew Miller’s lease is blatant retaliation for participation in tenant organizing, a legally protected action.

Tenants of OCF are actively seeking to connect with as many OCF tenants as possible to demand that OCF treats its tenants fairly and professionally during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. All OCF tenants are urged to contact Tenants of OCF at tenantsofocf@gmail.com or call 267-416-0708. □

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—Makasi Motema

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WORKERS WILL NOT DIE

Continued from page 1

militant struggle, which was uplifting to working and oppressed people.

‘Cough up that hazard pay!’

Across **Northern New Jersey**, which has experienced a recent escalation in COVID-19 cases, May Day actions targeted Amazon, Target, Whole Foods and Instacart, where workers struck as part of one of the largest nationwide strikes in response to poor working conditions. In Elizabeth, workers and activists circled in front of Amazon’s Flex warehouse in a 15-car caravan, with horns honking and calls for safe working conditions for all. Signs read: “Cough up that hazard pay!” and “Worker safety for all.”

“We are demanding, as immediate demands, safe working conditions for all workers,” said Eric Lerner, of Jobs and Equal Rights For All, one group which came out in support of the strike. “No work without personal protection equipment for all.” At the Elizabeth Detention Center, protesters demanded freedom for all immigrant detainees. They also called for a “Workers Way Forward” plan to address underlying conditions that led to the pandemic. (NJ Advance Media, May 1)

A caravan of 60 to 70 cars crisscrossed **Philadelphia** for nearly five hours on May Day, broadcasting demands of the international working class and making stops to show solidarity at various workplaces and neighborhoods in the city. Workers World Party called the action and organized it in close cooperation with Juntos, the New Sanctuary Movement, Philly Workers Solidarity Network, UNITE HERE Local 274 and Philly REAL (Racial, Economic and Legal) Justice.

Other organizations endorsing the action and contributing speakers included Asian Americans United, Black and Brown Workers Cooperative, Occupy PHA, Food Not Bombs Solidarity, the International Action Center, Put People



May Day in Portland, Ore.

WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY

First PA, the Poor People’s Campaign, African Family Health Organization, the Sol Collective and Socialist Alternative.

Starting at noon, the caravan’s first stop was Temple University Hospital where health care workers, organized by the Pennsylvania Association of School Nurses and Practitioners, held a rally demanding PPE for frontline workers and universal health care. (PASNAP is an increasingly political labor association of health care workers.) After stops outside a nursing home and in the Richard Allen Homes, a historic public housing site in Philadelphia, the May Day caravan held a mini-rally outside the now-shuttered Hahnemann Hospital to cheers from people in the area.

The hospital was a last resort for low-income workers. It was closed in late 2019 when its owner, hedge-fund vulture Joel Freedman, deemed it was not profitable enough. Despite pleas from city officials, Freedman refused to reopen the hospital when the COVID-19 virus arrived in the city. He demanded a minimum of \$1 million a month from taxpayers just to unlock the doors.

The caravan lingered outside the Philadelphia Immigration and Customs

Enforcement headquarters at 8th and Arch streets, where Erika Guadalupe Núñez of Juntos gave a fiery talk about the cruel abuses facing thousands of migrants in U.S. concentration camps and played two testimonials from residents whose family members were kidnapped by ICE.

Deandra Jefferson of REAL Justice spoke about the white supremacist roots of the United States. Joe Piette from Workers World gave an impassioned demand for the government to increase funding for the U.S. Postal Service and support postal workers.

Targeting the nearby federal prison, Fermin Morales described U.S. imperialism’s assault on Puerto Rico: “Across the street from the federal prison is the African American History Museum. And if you learn too much inside that museum, they’ll lock you up across the way! That’s how this empire works.”

The final stops of the caravan were at Amazon’s CEO Jeff Bezos-owned Whole Foods store on South Street where a protester already on the scene held a sign that read: “The workers in here are not protected.” A prerecorded message from a Whole Foods worker was broadcast through loudspeakers. The caravan ended

at the Hoa Binh Plaza, a Vietnamese market that was forced to close by gentrifying real estate speculators and developers.

In **Fredericksburg, Pa.**, activists and workers with the Latinx rights organization “Make the Road PA” staged a drive-by demonstration, demanding protection for workers. They protested outside two plants owned by Bell & Evans, which produces organic, antibiotic-free chicken sold at Whole Foods. Pennsylvania has more COVID-19 cases among meat and poultry processing workers than any other state, with over 850 confirmed cases and 22 workers sickened, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The protesters say two workers died and others got sick because Bells & Evans delayed providing PPE and implementing social distancing. Around 30 workers and activists who took part in a 20-car caravan starting in nearby Lebanon, Pa., were stopped from entering the complex, so they blasted their message from loudspeakers. Maegan Llerena, director of Make the Road PA, pointed out that the company, which prides itself on treating chickens humanely, is “abusing the workers while they say they’re protecting the animals. That does not make any sense.” (Inquirer, May 2)

‘Capitalism is killing us and the planet’

Over 100 cars jammed into the Communication Workers (CWA) Local 3204 parking lot, with the overflow lined up on the street, to begin the May Day Solidarity caravan through downtown **Atlanta**. The vehicles were decorated with signs and painted slogans reflecting a wide variety of issues critical to workers and their families. Groups organizing contingents included the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR), whose signs in English and Spanish denounced anti-immigrant policies and called for the release of all prisoners from detention centers. The Housing Justice League brought a number of vehicles

Southern Workers Assembly’s solidarity with meat packing workers

The Southern Workers Assembly “Safe Jobs Save Lives” campaign released this statement on May 2 after the April 28 presidential “Get back to work” order was issued.

On April 28, Workers Memorial Day — a day when the labor movement commemorates workers who have died on the job — and while the U.S. tops a staggering 61,000 deaths related to COVID-19, President Donald Trump utilized his

powers under the Defense Production Act to order meat and poultry processing plants to stay open.

Meat processing plants are COVID-19 hotspots of infection. This is another move which prioritizes corporate profits over the lives of workers, many of whom are Latinx, African American and immigrant.

More than 150 of the largest U.S. meat processing plants operate in counties — many in rural areas of the U.S. South — where the rate of coronavirus infection

is already among the country’s highest. Rates of infection around these plants are higher than those in 75 percent of other U.S. counties. The South is also a region where many of the governors are calling for workers to return to work, representing a strong base of anti-working-class racism and political conservatism.

While the bosses claim the industry has thus far maintained sufficient production, union leaders have pointed out that 20 workers have died, and at least 5,000 meatpacking workers and 1,500 food processing workers have been directly impacted by the virus at 48 plants. Those in the South are impacted by industrial pollution that is unregulated, affecting the health of millions and making them more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Meatpacking and slaughter companies can be found in every state in the South.

With the Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans blocking OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] from issuing a rule protecting essential employees during COVID-19, workers say they have little choice but to take matters into their own hands.

Meatpacking workers all over the country, working in freezing cold rooms and unable to practice social distancing,

have staged walk-outs demanding workplace safety from Kathleen, Ga., to Timberville, Va.

Meatpacking Workers in the South Need to Unite, Organize and Struggle!

Join the Southern Workers Assembly’s Safe Jobs Save Lives Campaign:

- Don’t Go to Work without a solid agreement that guarantees testing, monitoring, PPE [personal protective equipment], separation of work stations, 100% health care family coverage for virus treatment.
- If you don’t have a union, form a workers’ committee right away and open up discussions with management on these issues, and depending what they say and do, move to take protective collective actions.
- We call upon other workers and the general public to support meatpacking workers with a boycott of brands that refuse to abide by Safe Jobs Saves Lives mutual agreements.
- Connect with other workers in industries and employment sectors in the Safe Jobs Save Lives Campaign by contacting info@southernworker.org.

For more on the campaign, go to southernworker.org.



FOR CAPITALIST PROFITS!

covered with painted slogans calling for no rent, no evictions and housing for all.

Painters union members came with signage on their cars demanding PPE for all workers and calling out the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for failure to protect workers from dangerous working conditions. Industrial Workers of the World flags flew from car windows. Signs announced solidarity with specific groups of frontline workers — Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority drivers, postal workers, farmworkers, health care and domestic workers, grocery store workers and Amazon workers, just to name a few. WWP signs called for international solidarity and stressed the fight against racism, bigotry and war. A popular sign was "Capitalism is killing us and the planet."

Spirits were so high after returning to the CWA lot that a second caravan was organized to go to a nearby Target to express solidarity with workers who had refused to work on May Day. Some 50 cars circled the Edgewood Mall parking lot in front of Target with horns honking.

After meeting up at the union parking lot, another caravan headed to a Whole Foods to bring May Day solidarity to those workers. People in passing cars, pedestrians and workers coming outside to see what was going on raised fists, waved and cheered in approval. Drivers honked their horns. It was a gratifying May Day while protesters practiced social distancing.

In **Pensacola, Fla.**, the May Day demonstration was a collaborative effort among local organizers from WWP, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, and Strive (Socialist Trans Initiative), Pensacola's local transgender advocacy group. Their car caravan traveled through much of western and downtown Pensacola, including Brownsville and Attucks Court, as a show of solidarity with Black and Brown working-class residents of those neighborhoods. Many of them are being forced to work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents waved and cheered as the caravan went by.

The caravan also drove past Pensacola's Border Patrol office to protest the imprisonment of migrant people — at high risk for contracting the coronavirus because of the overcrowded conditions in detention camps — and to call for the abolition of ICE. The caravan's final destination was Baptist Hospital for a crucial show of solidarity with health care workers, who are not receiving hazard pay or PPE. They are on the frontlines of this pandemic, lauded as heroes while suffering the most under capitalism.

'Workers will not die for capitalist profits!'

Hospitality workers took to the streets of **New Orleans** the afternoon of May 1, calling for free health care and expanded unemployment benefits, among other demands. Dozens of socially distanced protesters lined up in cars and on bikes in a midcity parking lot. Before rolling into the streets, organizers with the New Orleans Hospitality Workers Alliance outlined their demands. Among them were free health care and testing for hospitality workers, hazard pay and access to protective gear, housing as a human right and unemployment assistance through the end of 2020. "We are saying workers will not die for capitalist profits," said one organizer through a megaphone from the roof of a parked car. (WWNO, May 2)

In the spirit of May Day, **Michigan**



Sign on car during Philadelphia May Day protest says it all.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

autoworkers traveled from **Detroit** and elsewhere to **Wyoming, Mich.**, and circled a General Motors plant in solidarity with Travis Watkins, who was fired by subcontractor Caravan Facilities Management after raising safety concerns. Specifically, he posted information on a private United Auto Workers Local 167 member's Facebook page about General Motors workers who had been walked out of a plant by management because of suspected COVID-19 infection.

Watkins said, "We're honoring the men and women of labor on May Day, fighting for the equality and dignity of all workers across the globe. This is much bigger than me. This is about the health and safety of all workers." (Interview with Frank Hammer, May 1)

Activists wove through the streets of **San Antonio, Texas**, in a May Day car caravan demanding a liveable income, housing and health care for all. Stops included the Bexar County Sheriff's Office to call for closing the jail; an apartment complex where the landlord posted eviction notices despite a city edict blocking evictions during the pandemic; a federal housing project where administrators have withheld residents' stimulus checks; and Whole Foods to support May Day strikers. One popular sign read: "Kicking ass for the working class."

In **Austin** a traffic stoppage was organized by RentStrikeATX to focus on the need for a total rent freeze in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organized and unaffiliated activists — people passionate about the need to bring attention to the plight of workers, including those recently murdered by Austin police — gathered for a May Day caravan of about 50 vehicles.

From there cars eventually merged onto North and South Interstate 35. Messages on signs included the need for a rent strike, a call for a general strike and demands for justice for Mike Ramos, recently murdered by the Austin Police Department. The caravan made its way downtown, filling up all lanes from southbound I35 to the exit ramps.

Eventually the caravan made a complete stop, with cars honking horns to bring attention to peoples' demands. After threatening to pull people from their cars, police rerouted the caravan. Ultimately caravan cars were forced into a parking lot where police vans and tow trucks were waiting. Cops arrested at least 22 people and towed their vehicles. RentStrikeATX's Facebook page has a fundraising appeal to raise legal fees for those arrested.

In **Oakland, Calif.**, International Workers' Day began early with a spirited picket line by members of National Nurses United in front of the Kaiser Permanente hospital complex. Over 75 nurses stood 6 feet apart in front of the main building chanting, banging drums and demanding safer working conditions, including PPE, during the pandemic.

Next, the International Longshore and Warehouse workers (ILWU) held a press conference and rally in the Port of Oakland. A work stoppage organized by ILWU Locals 10 and 34 highlighted the dangerous working conditions experienced on the docks by workers who are not being protected from COVID-19. Speakers included rent strike activists, striking University of California graduate students and Filipino activists who were supporting endangered cruise ship workers.



Kaiser nurses participating in a protest after their night shift at Oakland's Kaiser Hospital. Their demonstration was part of over 100 similar protests all over California on May Day for PPE and safer conditions for patients and nurses organized by National Nurses United.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

A caravan, organized by activists from General Strike 2020, brought out over 200 cars, which snaked from the port to Kaiser Hospital and stopped at the Oakland Police Department to demand "Free them All!" It then traveled to the School District building to highlight issues of inequity in distance-learning education when most families don't have internet access. Then cars went to other targets.

Oakland Sin Fronteras, the coalition of Oakland-based Latinx organizations, prisoners' rights, solidarity activist groups and rank-and-file workers, postponed their annual May Day march and instead held a two-part webinar titled "Workers Seize Power." The first part of the webinar — simultaneously translated into over five languages — brought together legal advocates, housing groups and public health experts who presented valuable information. The second part of the webinar was an international celebration of May 1, in which the many speakers focused on human rights, housing and prisoner struggles erupting in response to the pandemic.

In **Portland, Ore.**, 15 cars participated in a caravan organized by the Portland May Day Coalition. They stopped at locations where essential workers — putting themselves on the frontlines of the pandemic — are continuing to fight for PPE, social distancing measures and hazard pay. Drivers honked and shouted support for grocery store workers at Fred Meyers and Whole Foods, who went on strike at the end of March, and participated in the national one-day strike.

On March 22, workers at Burgerville, the nation's first fast-food restaurant to unionize, held a one-day strike for increased hazard pay and sick time for victims of COVID-19. Their customers and the workers applauded the caravan. The protesters also demanded PPE for the workers at Kaiser Health Care Facility, Central Bakery and the Senior Haven, an assisted living center, where management had fired worker Candy Sizemore-Harvey for asking for PPE for employees.

In **Seattle**, a 65-vehicle May Day motorcade gathered to demand justice and compensation for essential and excluded workers, including farmworkers, meatpackinghouse workers, im/migrant workers, health care and grocery workers, and others. After leaving Seattle, large contingents of cars joined the motorcade in **Tacoma** and Washington's capital **Olympia** where they ended at the Capitol building to deliver their demands.

The caravan was organized by El Comite and the May 1st Action Coalition, together with many supporters from labor, im/migrant and other solidarity groups. The "caravanistas" paraded up and down Olympia's Capitol Way when the State Patrol denied them entry to the capitol grounds for their legal demonstration. In the parking lot of a friendly church, a well-spaced rally was held across the street from capitol grounds.

Edgar Franks, political director of Familias Unidas por la Justicia, a union which represents 400 farmworkers, said, "We are being denied any kind of justice while being deemed essential." He said rules need to be put in place for farmworkers' health, housing, sanitation and overall safety — rules that reflect their status as essential workers.

Contributing to the article: Nate Chase, Julianna Cordray, Shelley Ettinger, Eno Flurry, Judy Greenspan, Martha Grevatt, Ted Kelley, Dianne Mathiowetz, Jim McMahan and Lyn Neeley.

COVID-19 = genocide for Detroit

By Martha Grevatt

May 4 — Coronavirus, COVID-19, the pandemic — or as they say in the Motor City “the ‘rona” — by any name this disease has been particularly devastating to Black-majority cities. Detroit, 80 percent Black and 10 percent Latinx, has been particularly hard hit. The three counties that comprise Metro Detroit — Wayne (which includes Detroit), Macomb and Oakland — have had at least 3,300 virus-related deaths as of May 4.

The entire state of Michigan has had 4,000 deaths, making it third in the country after New York and New Jersey. Outside of Metro Detroit, only one other county, Genesee, which includes Flint, has had over 100 deaths. While the state’s population is 14 percent African American, 41 percent of those who have died from COVID-19 statewide are African American.

A Facebook group, Detroit COVID-19 Memorial, puts a human face on the statistics. They include nurses, doctors, union leaders, clergy, youth coaches and others loved by the community they serve.

“As this crisis expands, we must take swift action to protect our senior citizen population and those economically impacted,” said State Representative Isaac Robinson. “We must defend the public health of all people including our most vulnerable residents and low-income families. The working families and students in my district already slammed by excessive car insurance costs are being devastated by the impact of this pandemic.” (Voice of Detroit, March 31)

Robinson, of Hamtramck, who also represented Detroit, died March 29 at age 44 of suspected COVID-19 complications. He had just introduced legislation for a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs.

Many families have lost more than one member. The youngest to die so far is five-year-old Skylar Harris. Detroit residents held a car caravan in solidarity with her family.

Hospitals and health care workers are overwhelmed by this tragic situation.

Why Detroit?

The reasons for so many deaths in Detroit are racism and poverty. Compounding the prime causes is the high number of households which had their water shut off. These ongoing shutoffs were denounced in 2014 by two United Nations rapporteurs as “contrary to human rights.” (UN News, Oct. 20, 2014)

How can one stay hydrated or engage in “frequent hand washing,” as recommended by medical experts, without running water?

Moreover, Detroiters are more likely to die from the virus because of the higher incidence of preexisting conditions, including asthma, obesity, kidney disease and heart conditions, compared to the rest of Michigan. (Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, conducted by state health officials, 2015-17)

“Rates of asthma, diabetes and obesity are higher among African Americans,” explains Dr. Velda Crowder, chair of the health committee for the Washington, D.C.-based Black Women for Positive Change. “Those chronic conditions increase the likeliness of serious illness from COVID-19, even among young people, said Crowder, an emergency physician.” (Detroit News, March 26)

Also contributing to the spread of the virus are the unsafe working conditions inside the auto plants where many Detroiters work. After workers protested the lack of social distancing and proper sanitation, Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles closed the plants

temporarily. But many autoworkers were already infected, along with people they came in contact with.

Close to 30 members of the United Auto Workers have died, including at least two members of this writer’s union, UAW Local 869. The Detroit Three are pushing to reopen the plants and restart production, supposedly with new safety measures in place — but workers are dubious, understandably so.

African Americans are disproportionately impacted by the virus in yet another way: More than half of all state prisoners are African American. Half of those tested in Michigan’s prison system have tested positive.

Capitalism behind the destruction

The racist, anti-working-class attacks on Detroit did not begin with the coronavirus. Detroit’s pivotal role in the Civil Rights and later the Black Liberation movement, and much earlier the U.S. labor movement, earned it the enmity of the ruling class. Auto plant closings, a trend that began in the 1950s and accelerated in the 1970s with the dismantling of Chrysler’s Dodge Main complex, have cost the city tens of thousands of jobs — and eroded its tax base.

Thanks to union wages in the auto industry, Detroit at one time had the highest rate of homeownership of any major U.S. city. But as jobs moved to the suburbs or out of Michigan altogether, or were eliminated by automation, many Black Detroiters saw their incomes drop. Now, because of racist predatory lending, Detroit has had the highest foreclosure rate since the 2008 recession.

Bloated interest payments to Wall Street banks undermined Detroit’s financial solvency, leading to the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history in 2013. What



PHOTO: METRO TIMES

Michigan State Representatives Jewell Jones and Isaac Robinson, co-sponsors of a bill for a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs. Robinson died March 29 of suspected COVID-19. Here they are protesting US Ecology, a polluting company in Detroit.

followed was a mass looting of city assets, slashing of union pensions and other austerity measures that the banks mandated — treating Detroit the same way they treat countries in the global South. This was accomplished via the appointment by then Gov. Rick Snyder of a dictator known as an “emergency manager” — Kevyn Orr of the Jones Day corporate law firm.

In 2012, Michigan’s legislature passed a law allowing the governor to impose emergency managers, stripping elected city officials of their powers. At one time half of Michigan’s Black residents, compared to 2 percent of white residents, were under emergency management.

While the city is not currently under an appointed fiscal dictator, Detroit’s white mayor, Mike Duggan, is a loyal corporate servant.

The heavily armed, well-funded fascists who invaded the Michigan Statehouse, pushing to get workers back to work, are happy to watch the death toll climb. While the capitalist class subjects Black cities to the ravages of COVID-19, a timely demand would be “Reparations for Detroit!”

Grevatt lived and worked in Metro Detroit from 2010 to 2019 and serves on the executive board of UAW Local 869.

Cuba: ‘We don’t deny anyone our assistance’

The Cuban Foreign Ministry on April 16 called on the international community to come together to combat the COVID-19 outbreak. Following are excerpts from the call.

The impact of COVID-19 can already be measured and will be assessed in the future by the striking numbers of people infected, the unacceptable numbers of deaths, the unquestionable damages to the world economy, production, trade, employment and personal income of millions of people.

It is a crisis that goes well beyond the scope of health. The pandemic has emerged and spread amidst a scenario previously marked by overwhelming economic and social inequalities within and among nations. With it, unprecedented migratory and refugee flows, xenophobia and racial discrimination have reemerged. The remarkable advances of science and technology, particularly in the area of health, focus in the pharmaceutical business and commercialization of medicine, rather than in securing the well-being and healthy living of majorities.

COVID-19 has come into a world overburdened by production and consumption patterns, especially in highly industrialized countries and among the elites of developing countries, that are unsustainable and incompatible with the finite character of natural resources upon which life on the planet depends. Before the first case was identified, there were 820 million people suffering from hunger worldwide, 2.2 billion people with no access to fresh water, 4.2 billion without access to safely managed sanitation services and 3 billion lacking basic amenities

for handwashing.

This scenario becomes more inadmissible when it is known that globally around \$6.7 billion is spent on a yearly basis only in advertising, while military expenditure amounts to \$1.8 trillion that are completely useless against the COVID-19 threat, which has already taken the lives of tens of thousands of people. ... In most developed countries, the death toll is higher among the poor, migrants and, in the specific case of the United States, among African Americans and Latinos.

Challenges for global community

The international community has to deal with this global threat while the biggest military, economic, technological and communicational power of the world implements a foreign policy that seeks to incite and promote conflicts, divisions, chauvinism, and supremacist and racist positions. At times when the worldwide combat against the COVID-19 pandemic requires boosting cooperation and the leading role of international organizations, particularly the United Nations and the World Health Organization, the current U.S. administration attacks multilateralism and seeks to disqualify the established leadership of WHO.

It also insists in its petty strategy of taking advantage of the circumstances to impose its dominance and attack countries whose governments it has discrepancies with. Some examples serve to illustrate that, like the recent and serious



Cuban medical brigade travels to Mexico to fight coronavirus.

military threats against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Another example is the immoral and persistent attack against Cuba’s selfless efforts to assist countries that have requested cooperation in the fight against COVID-19.

Top officials of the U.S. State Department devote their time to issuing statements threatening governments that, faced with the drama of the pandemic, exercise their sovereignty and decide to request Cuba’s assistance. The United States officials are knowingly committing a crime, when in the midst of a pandemic they attack Cuba’s international cooperation, seeking to deprive millions of people of their universal human right to health care services.

No country should assume it is big enough, rich enough or powerful enough to defend itself, isolating itself and ignoring the efforts and needs of others. Sharing and providing valuable and reliable information is urgent. Steps have to be taken to allow for the coordination of the production and distribution of medical equipment, personal protection equipment and

medicines, with a sense of justice. Countries with more available resources should share them with the most affected countries that are least prepared to cope with the pandemic.

Putting people’s needs first

That is Cuba’s approach. ... For decades we have accumulated experiences in the development of international cooperation in the area of health, as generously acknowledged by the World Health Organization and our counterparts. In the last few weeks, we have responded to cooperation requests.

So far, 21 brigades of healthcare professionals have been deployed to join in the national and local efforts of 20 countries.

All these actions are undertaken without neglecting the responsibility of protecting the Cuban population, a duty that is rigorously fulfilled despite the huge limitations imposed by the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade.

A recent example was an aid cargo from China that could not be shipped to Cuba because the carrier claimed the U.S. blockade banned it.

Cuba is convinced that these times require cooperation and solidarity. Cuba pursues a politically unbiased international endeavor that seeks to develop and share the scientific research results and experiences of several countries in the prevention of the disease, the protection of the most vulnerable, and social behavior practices that will contribute to shorten the duration of the pandemic and slow down the loss of lives. □

What the statistics reveal about Trump, China and the virus

By Deirdre Griswold

May 4 — The Trump administration is trying to deflect anger at its dangerously neglectful attitude toward the COVID-19 pandemic by blaming China. No surprise there.

It has been known from the beginning that the virus most likely came from a live animal market in the Chinese city of Wuhan, where it jumped the species barrier.

But Trump, counting on the impact of decades of anti-communist propaganda generated by both capitalist parties in the U.S., has stated that the virus originated in an unidentified “weapons lab” in Wuhan—a story first concocted by right-wing radio’s Rush Limbaugh back in February. Trump is even talking about suing the Chinese government for damages.

This president is certainly not known for either honesty or accuracy, but his political base doesn’t care. Racism and xenophobia are his “trump” cards. And he needs to blame someone for what has become the biggest U.S. medical disaster in decades.

Why blame China? Among other reasons, China’s success in containing the virus puts the U.S. authorities to shame. And Trump can’t have that.

The latest figures on the spread of COVID-19 show that as of May 4, the U.S. has by far the largest number of reported cases in the world: 1,177,918. By contrast, China has 82,877 reported cases. Yet China’s population is almost four times that of the U.S.!

What this boils down to is that a person living in the U.S. has been almost 57 times more likely to get the virus than a person living in China — even though China was

the first country to have to figure out how to deal with this new threat.

In the U.S., there is another big factor affecting the rising toll taken by the virus: racism. African-American and Latinx people are dying from the virus at a higher rate than white people. This reflects the kinds of jobs that people of color are forced to take, as well as inferior medical coverage and dire health conditions caused by poverty.

The number of U.S. cases reported is undoubtedly an undercount, especially in oppressed communities. It is also becoming clear that many people can be carrying the virus without severe symptoms. Additionally, there is no apparatus set up in the U.S. on a national level to test everyone in order to confirm and curb the spread of the disease.

The truth about China and COVID-19

A more accurate picture of the differences between the U.S. and China can be seen by comparing fatalities from the disease in both countries.

China has had just three coronavirus deaths per million people. The U.S. has had 206 deaths per million. (worldometers.info/coronavirus/#news)

And the pandemic toll will get even worse in this country because there are 17,144 new reported cases in the U.S. right now, and only two new cases in China.

When COVID-19 first broke out in Wuhan, the Chinese government was able to move quickly and shut down the area. Those in the epicenter were ordered to stay at home while necessities like food were brought to them. Emergency hospitals to care for and isolate the sick were built within days.

China critics in the U.S. called these measures



Hikers observing COVID-19 social distancing and masking precautions on the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall on May Day, the beginning of a five-day workers’ holiday in China.

“draconian” in stereotypical anti-communist language.

Instead, Chinese strategies against the pandemic saved countless lives. This was made possible by the collective character of China’s socialist system — and the confidence of the population in the decisions made by their leaders.

With a centralized leadership in control of the economy, instead of a hodgepodge of private owners competing for profits, decisive and timely action was possible. In addition, because of government policies, those living in the affected area didn’t have to worry about losing their jobs or being unable to pay rent during the quarantine, even if it lasted for months. By the weekend of May 2-3, China had begun opening up its economy again, very cautiously.

Trump and the right wing are guilty of many crimes. China bashing is one way they hope to divert attention as economic conditions continue to deteriorate in the U.S. More than ever, people’s lives depend on knowing the truth. □

Pennies for the workers, billions for the bosses

By Betsey Piette

The distribution of government funds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has torn away any facade of the U.S. as a “democracy,” with equal access to wealth. Even as unemployment, poverty and hunger reach levels not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s, banks and corporations look to their puppets in Congress and the White House for giveaways far greater than even Trump’s 2017 billionaire tax breaks.

In just five weeks from March 18 to April 22, as nearly 30 million workers lost their jobs, the U.S. billionaire class gained an additional \$308 billion from government handouts — a wealth increase of 10.5 percent, according to the Institute for Policy Studies. Some billionaires, including Amazon boss Jeff Bezos and his former spouse MacKenzie Bezos, Zoom founder Eric Yuan, Tesla founder Elon Musk and former Microsoft chief Steve Ballmer saw their net worth surge by over \$1 billion each. (Guardian, April 26)

In early April, the federal government passed an economic stimulus package called the Paycheck Protection Program with \$349 billion in forgivable loans to help small businesses cover payroll. Now it appears that billions of dollars from this program went directly to major chains or indirectly as fees to banks. Around 150 publicly traded companies received a combined \$600 million from this program. It is estimated that banks received over \$10 million just for processing these loans.

With national hotel and restaurant chains receiving millions of dollars in grants, the program was basically drained of funds. Genuine “small businesses” saw their loan requests denied because banks either refused or failed to process them. Major companies that received mega-millions include Ruth’s Chris Steak House, a \$250 million chain with 150 locations which received \$20 million. The Potbelly

chain, with over 400 locations valued at \$89 million, received \$10 million in mid-April.

Off the coast of Miami, the members-only resort Fisher Island, where residents’ incomes average \$2.2 million, received \$2 million in aid. New York City-headquartered Shake Shack, valued at \$1.6 billion, got a \$10 million grant, which it subsequently returned after news of it surfaced.

Many of the more than 70 publicly traded corporations, which had little difficulty securing federal funds, got assistance from JPMorgan Chase to secure their loans. A statement from the Wall Street bank acknowledged that its commercial banking unit, serving larger clients, was able to assist in completing the applications. (Washington Post, April 20)

\$1,200 for workers, \$1.6 million for millionaires

On April 24 Trump signed the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act to provide additional funding for small business loans, health care providers and COVID-19 testing. It also contained provisions for direct corporate payouts under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Under CARES, some 43,000 U.S. millionaires, who made too much money to qualify for Trump’s earlier coronavirus \$1,200 individual stimulus checks, will instead get an average of \$1.6 million each. The act lets owners of businesses taxed on their individual income, rather than corporate income, claim an unlimited amount of deductions against non-business income, including capital gains. (Washington Post, April 27)

But it does not stop there. Now vulture capitalists are holding out their hands for more, this time without any of the strings or limitations contained in previous stimulus legislation.

On April 28, the Federal Reserve, along with the Department of the Treasury, announced an upcoming program to provide billions in “emergency aid” to large U.S. corporations. The Fed is not requiring that companies use the funds to save jobs. It has put no limits on payments to executives or shareholders. Companies are free to lay off workers and cut wages and benefits, all the while padding executives’ pockets.

Under the plan the Fed will buy up to \$500 billion in bonds to cover the debt of large corporations which will be required to pay it back with interest. According to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, the agreement has congressional approval, even though all previous corporate-bailout coronavirus programs forbid companies from using funds for dividends, while placing limits on executive compensation.

Energy companies line up for their share

No corporate feeding trough would be complete without energy companies demanding a portion of the slops. With oil and gas prices plummeting due to overproduction and shoddy investments, even before the impact of COVID-19, the Independent Petroleum Association of America wants the Fed to give energy companies their maximum \$25 million loans to offset their previously existing debt. (Reuters, April 20)

Oil and gas companies and energy equipment providers, some with close ties to Trump, have already benefited to the tune of \$22 million from the “small business” loan program. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, taxpayers were already subsidizing energy companies with around \$20 billion annually.

In signing an executive order in late April, invoking the Defense Production Act to mandate meat and poultry processing plants stay open, Trump stipulated that plant owners should not be held liable if workers sicken and die on the



job. Now Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is following suit, asking that the next COVID-19 stimulus package provide liability protection for U.S. corporations against pending COVID-19-related claims from workers and consumers.

All this comes amid a mounting push by right-wing, neofascist and white supremacist groups to reopen businesses, despite evidence that the limited lifting of stay-at-home restrictions has already caused a spike in COVID-19 cases.

Under threats that refusal to resume work could result in the loss of unemployment benefits that many are still struggling to receive, pressure is also mounting on workers to return to jobs that have proven to be deadly. But will workers submit to this pressure without a fight?

Months of struggle to win concessions from bosses for hazard pay and vital personal protective equipment has shown workers the potential power they hold in their collective hands. Unionized workers have won major concessions. The Transport Workers in New York City fought for and won a guaranteed \$500,000 death benefit for families of members who died after contracting the virus on the job. Even non-unionized workers at Amazon, Whole Foods and other major corporations have succeeded in extracting concessions from their employers.

Once the power of the workers is unleashed, there may be no going back. □

Fascists do bosses’ dirty work

The emergence of neofascist vermin from under their rocks to demand "reopening" businesses—a demand dear to super-rich capitalist rulers—makes it imperative for the left to develop a blueprint for countering the fascist threat, a threat that has constantly reappeared in U.S. history.

On April 30, hundreds of right-wing protesters — some armed with automatic weapons — stormed Michigan’s Capitol building in Lansing. They demanded that state protections against COVID-19 be lifted and businesses be reopened. Police allowed armed neofascists inside the building and into a visitors’ gallery overlooking state legislators in session. Some legislators sent media posts saying they feared for their safety; others donned bulletproof vests.

Over the May 1 weekend, similar reactionary protests were held throughout the U.S. by a mix of white supremacist militias, religious fundamentalists and groups funded by right-wing foundations like Coors and Koch. On May 1, President Trump tweeted support for the Michigan armed fascists, calling them “very good people” — praise he previously bestowed on similar gangs marching in 2017 with Nazi symbols and Confederate flags in Charlottesville, Va.

The bankers and billionaires who back the Trump administration have been demanding workers risk their lives and get back to work—and quickly resume putting profits in the bosses’ pockets. They manipulate the fascists to promote this program.

The date chosen by the neofascists was no accident.

May 1 is International Workers’ Day. On this May Day workers in the U.S. were in the middle of an almost unprecedented surge of job actions — slow-downs, sick-outs, walkouts, wildcats, union-approved strikes and other rank-and-file organized protests. In the pandemic, workers are demanding job safety and protective equipment from the bosses, as well as sick pay, job protection against layoffs, health insurance and more — even “Medicare for All.”

The big business media gave the neofascists hours of airtime on May Day yet hardly glanced at the historic worker actions taking place. The armed right-wingers are simply an extension of capitalist “business as usual.”

The same types of gangs were the militias of colonizing settlers, the plantation patrols of the Southern slavocracy, the strike-breaking shock troops of Northern industrialists. Over centuries, these extra-legal forces have been the Posse Comitatus, Ku Klux Klan and now the Proud Boys.

U.S. owners of land and industry have always called out and funded their “bully boys” when oppressed peoples and workers have organized and made a break for freedom.

The function of these neofascist forces was clearly defined by Workers World Party co-founder Sam Marcy in his 1983 book “The Klan and the Government:

Foes or Allies?”

“It has to be remembered that the use of violence and mass repression is a congenital tendency of the capitalist state. Even in the so-called best of times the capitalist government not only tolerates terrorist organizations like the Klan, but once the class struggle of the workers and oppressed people takes on the character of a genuine mass upsurge, the capitalist government is more likely than ever to encourage and promote the likes of the Klan and other mediums of repression.”

Workers are rising in the U.S., fighting for their lives during the coronavirus pandemic. And the ruling class is calling out its shock troops to try to push them back.

As socialists, as left activists, as workers, our job is two-fold: First, we must staunchly support and organize with other workers and oppressed people to forge bonds of solidarity against all forms of capitalist oppression.

Second, we must resist the propaganda of demoralization and remember that over and over peoples’ resistance has risen to push back and defang these reactionary forces.

From Indigenous resistance that continues to this day to the centuries of enslaved peoples rising in rebellion, from the 1981 march that shut down Nazis in Buffalo, N.Y., to the 2017 united left organizing that broke the white supremacist march on Charlottesville, we have militant histories to inspire, instruct and strengthen us.

As Marcy wrote of the resounding 1981 defeat of the Nazis:

“Intransigence, which is so indispensable in any working-class struggle, did not alone account for the victory of the anti-fascist progressive coalition in Buffalo. It was also careful assessment of the political relationship of forces in the area and in the country. It was good, efficient organization, free from any dogmatic approach to the phenomenon of fascist violence, free from sectarianism. It was reliance on the mass of the workers and progressives, and [on] attempts to achieve the broadest possible alliance with all elements willing, ready and able to put up a vigorous struggle.”

There, in one paragraph, is a blueprint for action against the current eruption of neofascist forces. □

The Klan & the Government Foes or Allies?

By Sam Marcy

Examines the special relationship with the state that has allowed the Ku Klux Klan to exist for over a century despite its criminal history of lynchings, murders, and intimidation. Published in 1983.

Read it free at www.workers.org/marcy/klan/



WWP May Day message: Organize!

Continued from page 1

Great Depression. Some say worse than the one in the 1930s. This means all kinds of miseries and suffering. In the United States alone, an estimated 50 million people have filed for unemployment in the recent month. [The government] says 30 million but even the government estimate is an underestimate, because a lot of people cannot access the state unemployment websites because they’ve crashed. And so many workers do not qualify for unemployment insurance.

But the good news — if there is good news in this nightmare — is that while workers are freaking out and workers are traumatized, they’re not paralyzed. They’re fighting back. They’re resisting. They’re organizing. They’re walking out in places where they don’t have unions — places like Amazon, Whole Foods, Instacart and other places where they don’t even have a union.

The workers decided to choose May Day to have a May Day strike against international businesses. I don’t know how widespread they were, how wide



Larry Holmes, speaking during the WWP May Day webinar.

the participation was, but that’s a great thing. That’s a sign of strength and militancy. People are organizing rent strikes. I don’t know what the participation is in the rent strikes, but it seems to be getting momentum.

The important thing for us to know is that something important is happening — something that doesn’t happen every day and only happens once or twice in a century maybe. Workers are beginning to fight back militantly, and they’re beginning to organize at the grassroots — not the top down, but from the bottom up. And this has tremendous potential. And it

could turn this nightmare into the working class becoming bigger, more organized, more muscular, and more militant, but it needs our help. It needs solidarity.

We look to the unions to help, and the better unions, like UE 150 [United Electrical Workers Local 150], will help. They’re already there. But unions do not represent more than 9 percent to 10 percent of the workers in this country. Hopefully that will change, but that’s the situation right now. And so we’ve got to experiment with other things.

Workers assemblies are inclusive, not exclusive

What we’re looking into is experimenting with and expanding the concept of workers assemblies. We’ve looked at our friends and comrades in the South who’ve had a Southern Workers Assembly for a number of years. And they seem to have been able to get a lot out of that. And we think it’s time that that idea spreads from the South to the East, to the North, to the West, and all over. And our party and other forces are dedicated to doing what we can to see that happen.

There are good things about workers assemblies, [but they] can’t do everything that unions can do. But they’re not just an industry. It could be organized on a city or regional basis or a smaller basis, [and] it can invite workers from everywhere to come in — workers who sometimes don’t seem to be welcomed in the organized labor movement. These include gig workers, who are called independent contractors, but they [need to] qualify for unemployment benefits; and migrant workers, many of whom do not qualify for unemployment benefits and their life is hell enough.

We think of sex workers, or others the movement doesn’t even think are part of the working class. But we have got to

change that thinking. Even prisoners are workers. They are incarcerated workers, and it’s time that we view them that way and get them their seat at the table of the working class on an international basis.

A lot of young people, forced into gig work, don’t understand that they are a vital part of the working class. They’re getting radicalized because of what the capitalist crisis is doing to them, and we need to say: “Yes, you’re a part of our class, welcome. And moreover, we need your help. You learned some skills in college; help us out with that. It’ll make our movement stronger.”

So this is what we’re focused on.

Unemployment is growing and growing to depression levels. We’re going to need some kind of huge fightback for the unemployed. That’s the way this struggle got started in the ‘30s, even before the industrial unions began organizing in the mid- 30s. So we’ve got to think about that, commit ourselves to that. And by the way, if you are unemployed, either recently or long-term, maybe you can help out in providing some leadership for that.

So my message on May Day 2020 is organize, organize, organize! It’s time that we made this message clear, that for all the issues facing our class, not just here but all over the world, the need for organization is first and foremost. And we must take this crisis, this pain, this suffering and these attacks and turn them into the opportunity to organize our class, particularly the most downtrodden and the most oppressed on the widest scale possible.

If you’re interested in a socialist party that prioritizes organizing workers, we invite you to check out my party, Workers World Party, and we invite you to join it. Happy May Day.

See the webinar at www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHIXbpqCrQ

SOCIALIST DEMANDS

1. Free healthcare for all
2. Nationalize the healthcare system under community control. Build emergency hospitals
3. Full pay, benefits and guaranteed income for all
4. Food, housing, medical supplies, & utilities including internet for all
5. Suspend rent, evictions, mortgages, utility shutoffs & ALL debt

FOR THE COVID-19 CRISIS

6. Prioritize resources for communities of color, migrants, LGBTQ+ people, seniors, youth, people with disabilities
7. Empty prisons & detention centers. Shut down ICE. End racist attacks
8. Community control. No cops, military
9. \$2 trillion to workers, not the banks
10. End U.S. wars, sanctions, and environmental destruction

WORKERS WORLD PARTY

Workers and oppressed of the world unite! workers.org

Taking advantage of pandemic

Israel moves to annex more Palestinian land

By Susan Abulhawa

Speaking to students at Tel Aviv’s Bar Ilan University in November 1989, Benjamin Netanyahu, at that time the Israeli deputy foreign minister, said: "Israel should have exploited the repression of the demonstrations in China [at Tiananmen Square], when world attention focused on that country, to carry out mass expulsions among the Arabs of the territories."

In other words, Netanyahu was lamenting a missed opportunity to carry out more war crimes with impunity. In fact, committing war crimes in the chaos of international confusion and/or distraction has been Israel’s modus operandi since its inception. This came to fruition with the terrorizing, massacring and expelling of indigenous Palestinians under the cover of Europe’s holocaust and World War II.

Behind the popular romantic narratives of Israel’s existence is a reality of wanton murder, theft and ineffable misery and suffering. This malfeasance is not merely the strategy of a settler-colonial state bent on ethno-religious purity. Rather it is the national supremacist mindset of a government and citizenry that propel the engine of land theft and settlement, complete with fine-tuned tools to take everything: apartheid laws, mass imprisonment, home demolitions, property confiscations, murder, daily harassment and humiliation, control, cultural appropriation, bombing, night raids, day raids, school raids, kidnappings and propaganda. All to take the land, water, heritage and home of the terrain’s true, native people.

Now, 31 years after Tiananmen, Netanyahu is the prime minister of Israel and is taking full advantage of the current global coronavirus pandemic to consolidate more power over the whole of what is Palestine. Israel is pushing to formalize its control over the majority of the West Bank land area, inching closer to fulfilling the promise of its flag: a Star of David between two lines, symbolizing Israeli reign from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River.

In 1948, Israel formalized its theft of 78 percent of Historic Palestine. After launching a war in 1967, it then occupied all of Palestine and formally annexed Jerusalem. The Oslo Accords of 1993 allowed Israel to control approximately 60 percent of the West Bank, in what is called Area C, ostensibly as a trust that would be handed over to the future Palestinian state.

However, as the world finally understands, Israel never intended to let go. Instead, they built settlements at break-neck speed, importing Jews from other countries to populate them, offering various economic incentives in order to create “facts on the ground.”

Now, Israel proposes to formalize its control by annexing 30 percent of the West Bank, which includes the most fertile and resource-rich lands—of course. It has pursued a strategy of imperialism by the inch, the incremental theft of land in normal times so as not to arouse international ire. And in times of upheaval or distraction, like a global pandemic, it takes bigger bites.

From a small gang of European colonizers at the turn of the 20th century, the Zionists went from owning less than 3 percent of the land to now controlling approximately 92 percent of Historic Palestine

(including Area C) and 100 percent of all water resources—which they ration to Palestinians at three times the cost of water sold to Jews in the same area. They also totally control all commerce, food production, borders and movement.

Consistent with the government’s nefarious aims, illegal Israeli settlers are exploiting the pandemic lockdown, imposed in the occupied West Bank, to attack Palestinian homes and livelihoods.

Destruction of Palestinian farms

In a single week in April, there were three incidents in which Israeli settlers destroyed Palestinian farms and paved the roads in the districts of Nablus, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In separate incidents, settlers attacked olive groves, cutting down trees that are hundreds of years old and belong to Palestinian families who traditionally subsisted on them.

Settlers have increased their vandalism of cars and property belonging to Palestinians, with instances documented in Madama, Burqa and Burin.

“We experience attacks from the settlers a few times a month,” Ghassan al-Najjar, a 30-year-old activist in Burin, a village 3 miles south of Nablus, told Middle East Eye. “But ever since we were put under lockdown because of the coronavirus, it has increased tenfold.” He continued, adding that settlers, under the protection of Israeli soldiers, have been raiding the village daily.

The Palestine Liberation Organization issued a statement against these abuses, as well as Israel’s recent desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, when Israeli settlers stormed the mosque under police protection.

“The escalation in settlement activities coincides with the crimes of settler gangs who are wreaking havoc against and assaulting our people by cutting down trees and attacking houses and vehicles in the streets, and starting to build roads for settlers, as is now taking place between the villages of Za’atra and Hawwara for the use of settlers, which is an attempt to create the Bantustans and ghettos for our people, believing that they can take advantage of the current situation to pass the so-called American deal of the century,” said the PLO in a statement after a meeting in Ramallah to discuss the latest developments.

The statement also rejected Israel’s recent excavations near the wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israel has been digging under the mosque and the Dome of the Rock since 1967, trying to find some trace of the Jewish Temple they claim is there. After 53 years of digging and excavating, they’re still empty-handed, with no evidence to show in support of their romantic narrative.

Their colonial fairy tale of Israel belies the destruction of an entire ancient society that has lived, loved, built, farmed and died in that land for millennia. And now Israel is using the global pandemic as cover to take one more stab at erasing the Palestinians all the more.

A Palestinian-American writer and political activist, Abulhawa is the author of "Mornings in Jenin" (2010) and founder of a nongovernmental organization, Playgrounds for Palestine. Abulhawa’s parents, born in At-Tur in Jerusalem, were refugees of the 1967 war.

Britain: Palestinian movement scores big legal win

By Kathy Durkin

The Palestine Solidarity Committee won a legal victory for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign in Britain when the country’s highest court issued a landmark ruling that struck a blow against the Whitehall government on April 29. Supreme Court judges repudiated regulations that prohibited local governments from making “ethical” pension fund divestment decisions contrary to official policies.

In this case, the top court ruled that local councils had a right to divest retirement plans from companies that are complicit in Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands—and also divest from Britain’s arms industry. This decision cannot be appealed.

The PSC began this legal fight in 2017 to challenge regulations issued by the British government a year earlier. Such regulations barred local councils from divesting pension plans from other countries and from Britain’s arms manufacturers.

One provision specifically prohibited divesting from businesses that traded in goods produced in the illegally occupied Palestinian territories. This provision’s intended aim was to criminalize support for the BDS campaign and intimidate Palestinian activists and their allies. British Conservatives allied with Israel promoted the anti-BDS policy. They use every avenue to try to suppress the burgeoning global movement in support of Palestinian rights. The new ruling shows they can’t stop this movement.

The Israeli government and its allies in Europe and the U.S. have promoted anti-BDS policies and legislation. The court ruling is a significant legal victory against this effort to suppress pro-Palestinian activism and speech.

There have been some other gains in Europe. The BDS movement website reported on Jan. 13 that five United Nations rapporteurs criticized the German government in October 2019 for condemning the BDS campaign based on the lie that it is “anti-Semitic.”

Spurred on by this criticism, some German courts have ruled that denying Palestinian solidarity groups from public spaces violated free speech and assembly rights. There have been some other legal advances for BDS, but this campaign is still the focus of attack in many countries.

There are danger signals ahead in Britain. Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared in December that he would introduce a law banning public bodies from working with anyone involved in the BDS campaign. Israel and its imperialist allies refuse to accept defeat.

In the U.S., Israel succeeded in lining up officials in 28 states to enact antiboycott laws to suppress solidarity with Palestine. These laws aim especially at college campuses where support for the besieged peoples of Gaza and the West Bank runs high. Federal courts stopped Arizona, Kansas and Texas from enforcing anti-BDS laws. These rulings are a result of struggles on the ground.

The worldwide BDS campaign for freedom, justice and equality is modeled on the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. It aims to pressure Israel to end its 53-year military occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people.

Even during the coronavirus pandemic, this compelling movement is growing. U.S.-backed Israeli repression of the Palestinian people will not stop their struggle or quell the sympathy and solidarity of the global multinational working-class and anti-imperialist forces.) □

Venezuela foils attempted invasion from Colombia

By Arielle Robinson

Workers World Party strongly condemns the attempted invasion of the sovereign country of Venezuela and planned attacks on its leaders by mercenary forces from Colombia in league with the U.S. government. WWP expresses our solidarity with the Venezuelan people and their government, headed by President Nicolás Maduro.

The Venezuelan government foiled an attempt on May 3 by mercenaries to enter Venezuela on speed boats from Colombia and to commit terrorist attacks within the country. The group from Colombia arrived on a beach in La Guaira, a port city approximately 20 miles from Caracas, early Sunday morning.

Due to Venezuela’s intelligence efforts, the Bolivarian National Armed Forces and the Special Actions Forces of the Bolivarian National Police were able to intercept the boats, killing eight mercenaries and detaining two of them, reported the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle of New York. Some of the mercenaries fled. Among the dead is Captain Robert Colina who used the alias “Pantera.”

As reported by Telesur on May 3, among items Venezuelan authorities seized from the mercenaries were 10 rifles, two machine guns, one glock, six trucks, one boat with two outboard motors, cartridges, satellite phones, uniforms and helmets marked with the U.S. flag.

Venezuela’s Minister for People’s Power, Justice and Peace Nestor Reverol said, "They tried to carry out an invasion by sea, a group of terrorist mercenaries from Colombia, in order to commit terrorist acts in the country, murdering leaders of the revolutionary government.”

President of the Venezuelan Constituent Assembly Diosdado Cabello said the terrorist attempt is still under investigation with the help of the Bolivarian Navy. He stressed that the attack was a coup attempt funded by the United States, its Drug Enforcement Administration and the government of Colombian President Ivan Duque. Cabello stated that among the terrorists arrested was a U.S. DEA agent.

In a statement issued by the Bolivarian National Armed Forces, Venezuelan Minister of Defense Vladimir Padrino said: "We maintain the search for any terrorist element or cell that wants to disrupt national sovereignty and independence, be it by air, sea or land. We are determined to defend Venezuela, and we declare ourselves in permanent rebellion against imperialism and those who dare to damage national sovereignty." □



Impacto a largo plazo de caída histórica del precio del petróleo

Por Betsey Piette

Por primera vez en la historia, el 20 de abril, el precio del petróleo estadounidense cayó a menos \$38 por barril. Esta fue una caída de casi \$100 por barril desde enero de 2020 cuando el petróleo era de \$60 por barril.

El 21 de abril, los precios del petróleo cayeron aún más, hundiendo las acciones de Estados Unidos a su peor pérdida desde el 1 de abril. Los rendimientos del Tesoro también cayeron, aumentando aún más las preocupaciones del mercado. La caída negativa de los precios afecta los contratos de futuros sobre el petróleo que se entregarán en mayo.

Los “contratos de futuros” se refieren al precio del petróleo entregado en una fecha posterior. El “rendimiento del Tesoro” es el porcentaje de interés del rendimiento de la inversión en la obligación de deuda del gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

El exceso, particularmente en el petróleo crudo, es tan grave que los comerciantes se encuentran con reservas de petróleo, no hay lugar para ponerlas y pocos compradores. Además del gasto, después de que el petróleo ha sido bombeado desde el suelo, debe almacenarse antes de las ventas futuras. Las instalaciones de almacenamiento podrían alcanzar la capacidad máxima en tres semanas. La alternativa, cerrar la producción de petróleo, corre el riesgo de dañar los costosos equipos de perforación.

¿Qué hay detrás de la drástica caída del precio del petróleo, cuánto durará y qué revela este momento histórico sobre la sobreproducción capitalista?

¿Regalando petróleo?

Con muy poca gente conduciendo o volando, y con las fábricas cerradas, se anticipa que la demanda mundial de petróleo caerá a los niveles vistos por última vez a mediados de la década de 1990. Actualmente, el precio anticipado del petróleo estadounidense que se entregará en junio y julio cayó a \$11,57 por barril. Después de que el presidente Trump hizo nuevas amenazas de guerra contra Irán el 22 de abril, el precio de los futuros subió a \$13,78.

Pero si el precio sigue siendo negativo, los productores de petróleo se enfrentarán al dilema de regalar petróleo o pagarle a alguien para que lo tome.

En un mundo socialista, los productores distribuirían petróleo a los países más necesitados. En 2005, por ejemplo, cuando Argentina, endeudada por el FMI, enfrentó una escasez de combustible, Venezuela, que se inclina por los socialistas y productora de petróleo, enfrentando su propia escasez de leche y productos lácteos, organizó un intercambio de productos.

La caída en los precios del petróleo debería significar que las personas en los EE.UU. Y otros países capitalistas podrían pagar menos para calentar sus hogares o llenar sus automóviles. Pero no esperes que algo así suceda bajo el capitalismo impulsado por las ganancias.

Gran parte de la culpa de esta crisis se ha atribuido a la pandemia de COVID-19. Sin embargo, el impacto de la sobreproducción de gas natural y petróleo a partir de la fracturación hidráulica (fracking) se sintió mucho antes de la pandemia. Incluso antes de que llegara el coronavirus, un exceso de petróleo mundial, debido a la sobreproducción, estaba afectando los mercados de inversión.

¿Por qué la caída del precio del petróleo?

A principios de marzo, la OPEP y Rusia acordaron reducir el precio del petróleo por barril. Ambas entidades disfrutaban de bajos costos de producción que lo hacen posible. La OPEP anunció que también reduciría la producción. Arabia Saudita, miembro de la OPEP, vio una posible ventaja ya que los precios más bajos podrían dañar la producción de petróleo de esquisto bituminoso en los EE.UU., ahora un importante competidor de exportación de petróleo.

Rusia, que ya se vio afectada por las sanciones de Estados Unidos, anunció que mantendría la producción en los niveles actuales porque necesita los ingresos. Con la producción afectada por las sanciones de Estados Unidos, Rusia no tenía ningún incentivo para cargar con la carga de la deuda energética de Estados Unidos.

Recientemente, más de 12 de los principales países productores de petróleo han acordado limitar la producción a entre 10 y 15 millones de barriles por día, a partir

de mayo. Sin embargo, incluso eso no fue suficiente para detener la caída histórica de los precios.

'Cambio radical en las perspectivas económicas'

Gran parte del petróleo y el gas natural producido en los Estados Unidos depende de las formaciones de esquisto bituminoso. El costo de producción estadounidense por barril es considerablemente más alto que en los principales competidores productores de petróleo y gas. Durante más de una década, el petróleo y el gas de esquisto bituminoso de EE.UU. se basaron en dos factores: inversiones constantes de gigantes de compañías petroleras, bancos y firmas de inversión, y una creciente demanda del mercado mundial de petróleo y gas de EE.UU. Estados Unidos también usa sanciones contra los principales exportadores de petróleo como Venezuela, Irán y Rusia para aumentar su ventaja en el mercado.

Desde el inicio, el fracking se ha basado en inversionistas de bolsillo profundo que están dispuestos a apostar en ventas futuras. Pero para cubrir el costo de las inversiones de la producción de petróleo y gas de esquisto se requería un rendimiento de al menos \$48 por barril. Por el contrario, los costos actuales de producción de petróleo en Arabia Saudita rondan los \$2,80 por barril.

En abril, el gigante energético estadounidense Halliburton, un importante productor de petróleo de esquisto bituminoso, informó una pérdida de \$1,1 mil

millones en el primer trimestre de 2020. Redujo drásticamente los costos de producción, despidió a cientos permanentemente y despidió temporalmente a miles de trabajadores. Se espera una nueva disminución en los ingresos y la rentabilidad para el resto de 2020.

Chris Rupkey, economista financiero jefe de MUFG Union Bank, ha declarado: “El mercado del petróleo está operando como si estuviéramos en una nueva Gran Depresión y la demanda no va a volver en meses, sino en años. Ha habido un cambio radical en las perspectivas económicas”. (New York Post, 20 de abril)

Sin embargo, algunos países consumidores de petróleo pueden beneficiarse de esta crisis del precio del petróleo. Durante décadas, los importadores de petróleo han pagado a los exportadores de \$60 a \$70 por barril o más. Actualmente, debido a la falta de demanda, los precios del petróleo han sido de \$27 a \$30 por barril.

Entonces, a pesar de que el uso de petróleo ha disminuido recientemente en China e India debido a las restricciones de cuarentena de COVID-19, la crisis del precio del exceso de petróleo podría significar miles de millones en ahorros anuales para India y China.

Con un futuro incierto para la producción mundial a raíz de la pandemia de COVID-19, esta transferencia de riqueza de los países productores de petróleo a los países consumidores de petróleo podría ser un factor económico y político en el futuro. □

Venezuela

Extractos de un artículo en Resumen Latinoamericano, 4 mayo.

El 3 de mayo, las autoridades venezolanas frustraron un intento de incursión por vía marítima en el país.

El presidente de Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, a través de un discurso televisado la noche de este 4 de mayo, ha declarado que uno de los 13 detenidos, capturados como resultado de la frustración del intento de incursión en este país latinoamericano del pasado domingo, ha afirmado que entre los integrantes de su grupo había dos ciudadanos estadounidenses miembros del equipo de seguridad personal del presidente de EE.UU.

De acuerdo con el mandatario, la pertenencia de estos estadounidenses a la seguridad de Donald Trump fue manifestada “por un ciudadano de apellido Baduel”.

Tras la detención de los incursores, las autoridades venezolanas obtuvieron la documentación de Luke Alexander Denman y Airan Seth Berry, dos estadounidenses que formaban parte del grupo.

El presidente Maduro mostró durante el discurso sus papeles, que incluyeron los pasaportes estadounidenses de cada uno,

las licencias para conducir y documentos de veteranos del Ejército de EE.UU., así como las tarjetas de identificación que demuestran la pertenencia de ambos a la empresa de seguridad privada estadounidense Silvercorp USA.

Anteriormente, el dueño de esta firma, el militar estadounidense retirado Jordan Goudreau, se atribuyó el intento de incursión, ocurrido el pasado domingo en Venezuela, y vinculó al diputado opositor Juan Guaidó con la planificación y financiamiento de dicho plan.

Incursión fallida

Este 3 de mayo, el ministro de Interior y Justicia de Venezuela, Néstor Reverol, informó de un intento de incursión por vía marítima en el país, que fue frustrado por las autoridades locales.

“Pretendieron realizar una invasión por vía marítima un grupo de mercenarios terroristas, procedentes de Colombia, con la finalidad de cometer actos terroristas en el país, perpetrar asesinatos a líderes del Gobierno revolucionario e incrementar el espiral de violencia (...) y con ello derivar en un nuevo intento de golpe de estado”, declaró el ministro.

El Alto mandatario aseguró que la DEA buscó grupos de narcotráfico para unir esfuerzos y propiciar el terrorismo en la nación suramericana, “la DEA buscó a los capos y carteles de alta guajira colombiana, de la guajira venezolana y de varios estados del país particularmente Falcón, La Guaira, Caracas y Miranda”, enfatizó.

Asimismo, el jefe de Estado denunció que la operación bélica contra la estabilización del país se preparó desde el 10 de marzo, “dependía de una convocatoria que lograr desde la oposición desencadenar un conjunto de hechos violentos y crear una escalada, fracasa la convocatoria y luego inicia la cuarentena (...) luego se da la visita de Iván Duque a Washington y se le da la orden de incendiar a Venezuela como sea”, aseveró.

El presidente reiteró que desde horas de la madrugada del lunes, ordenó activar el Escudo Bolivariano en pro de la defensa de la Patria, “ordené desde anoche activar operaciones con 25.000 hombres de la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana (...) Las fuerzas especiales, grupos de comando, paracaidista, agentes de Policía Bolivariana, salieron a la búsqueda y captura de los grupos terroristas”, agregó. □